



United States  
of America

# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 112<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 157

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, MARCH 8, 2011

No. 34

## Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JEFF MERKLEY, a Senator from the State of Oregon.

### PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Almighty God, whose word has taught us to pray without ceasing, guide us to pray according to Your will. May our Senators pray not only in challenging times, or to ask for special blessings, but because they love You and desire to do Your will. Remind them that our Nation was born in the spirit of prayer and that the intercession of righteous people has helped America survive and prosper. Use their vibrant prayer life to make them kind but firm, compassionate but resolute, loyal but independent. May Your grace be sufficient for all their needs.

We pray in Your loving Name. Amen.

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JEFF MERKLEY led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

### APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. INOUE).

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

U.S. SENATE,  
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,  
Washington, DC, March 8, 2011.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JEFF MERKLEY, a Sen-

ator from the State of Oregon, to perform the duties of the Chair.

DANIEL K. INOUE,  
President pro tempore.

Mr. MERKLEY thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

### MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for 2 hours, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time divided or controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the minority controlling the first hour and the majority controlling the next hour, with 30 minutes under the control of the Senator from Massachusetts.

The Senator from Wyoming is recognized.

### GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor of the Senate to discuss an issue that is critically facing the American people: It is the price of gasoline at the pump. It is something that, in my opinion, will impact our economy, impact the economic recovery we are all hoping will continue in this country. But with every penny the cost of gasoline goes up, it has been estimated it takes about a billion dollars away from the amount of money that can be spent on other things in this country and to growing the economy.

We are at a point where the American people, who have to balance their budgets every year—and States have to do it, of course. Washington doesn't do that, but the American people do. They

have to focus on their pocketbooks. When they are going to fill up with gas at the pump and are noticing that they are approaching a point where it is going to be \$100 to get a fill-up, they worry about the impact on the quality of their life, their ability to put food on the table for their children, and clothing on their children, and even have the money to get back and forth to work—those fortunate enough to have jobs.

One can say: Well, is it really a problem? I believe it is. I filled up yesterday morning in Casper. A young man in front of me at the filling station was filling up his pickup truck. He was watching the numbers go up and up. I filled up a week ago in Wyoming as well. We use a lot of gasoline in Wyoming. We travel long distances. I was filling up in the evening. I put my credit card in, and it stopped at \$75 because apparently they have to reset these pumps. One would think that with \$75 one would have enough money to fill up. But not as these gas prices continue to rise.

My concern is that so much of this money is being sent overseas to people who are trying to blow us up. We have an opportunity to be much more secure in our energy resources by developing our energy resources at home. It just seems that this administration's policies are making it that much harder.

One may say: How high can gasoline prices go? With the unrest in the Middle East, a front-page story a few days ago in USA TODAY said: "If unrest spreads, gas may hit \$5 a gallon"—\$5 a gallon by summer.

We need to do some things in this country that this administration has continued to block. We need to find more of our own energy, be reliant more on ourselves and less on foreign sources of energy. That means doing three things: exploring offshore, exploring on Federal land, and exploring in Alaska. We know there are huge reserves of oil, of energy in those locations. Yet day by day those efforts are

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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being blocked. The impact on our overall economy is huge, and it is because of policies of this administration.

USA TODAY this morning: "Will gas prices stall U.S. upturn? Consumers could cut spending again."

It is not in the best interest of this country for us to have energy policies that make it more expensive for Americans to gas up their cars. It does not help the economy of this country when the policies of this administration do things that make it more expensive and harder for small businesses to create jobs and hire people. We are trying to get people hired, back to work.

That is what we need to focus on—jobs and the economy. When the administration's policies cut into our ability to use energy sources from within this country—red, white, and blue energy jobs; red, white, and blue energy as well—and just send more money overseas, that does not help us as a nation, it does not help our economy, and it does not help strengthen our communities. We are so blessed in this country with wonderful families, wonderful communities, and wonderful land. Yet we do not seem to be making wise decisions on a daily basis with the policies coming out of this administration.

It is interesting to see who is actually benefiting from these increased costs because we know American families are not benefiting, we know American taxpayers are not benefiting, and we know people trying to get their kids off to school are not benefiting. Who is benefiting from this huge increase in the cost of energy and the cost of oil? All we need to do is go to the front page of the business section of today's New York Times: "Fears About Mid-east Oil Pay Off for Russia." For Russia, Mr. President. "Whatever the eventual outcome of the Arab world's social upheaval, there is a clear economic winner so far: Vladimir V. Putin." Right there, that is the winner. The economic policies of this administration to limit our ability and curtail our ability to use American energy, American oil, to keep down the cost of gasoline, are benefiting Russia.

It says:

Russia, which pumps more oil than Saudi Arabia, is reaping a windfall from the steep rise in global energy prices resulting from instability in oil regions of the Middle East and North Africa . . . Russia does not have any oil wells standing idle . . . Right now Russia is pumping oil at its top capacity.

In a country where we and this Congress in particular choose winners and losers in energy, the winner seems to be Russia because of the policies of this administration.

The Hill newspaper this morning said: "Pump pain for Obama." This clearly lies specifically at the feet of the President because of the policies of this administration.

We have had a situation in the Gulf of Mexico where there has been a moratorium, which is extended almost permanently, shutting down the use of oil

reserves for the United States. The administration—so happy, and pronounced the moratorium—has not until this week allowed for an additional permit and finally one when the price of gasoline went up at the pump 38 cents on average, about \$3.50 per gallon.

The Department of Interior, last October in the Federal Register, had a solution. They had some ideas about this because the Department of the Interior admitted—the President's own Secretary and his Department of Interior admitted that what they were doing in the Gulf of Mexico would have an impact.

It says:

The impact on the domestic deepwater hydrocarbon production as a result of these regulations is expected to be negative.

What it means is that it is going to cut down on American sources of energy. We need energy security. We as a nation need to do it in an environmentally responsible way, and we need to focus on economic growth. This administration does not seem to be willing to make that distinction about energy security and economic growth and the needs we have to help make our economy stronger.

What is the administration's position? What, as of October of last year, was their position on all of this to say: OK, we know we are going to have impacts in the gulf. They didn't say: Oh, I know, we can go onshore and look on Federal land. They didn't say: Let's go to Alaska to explore. This is this administration's position. They said:

Currently, there is sufficient spare capacity in OPEC—

In OPEC, in the Middle East—

to offset a decrease in Gulf of Mexico deepwater production that could occur as a result of this rule.

The rule that they are going to shut down the gulf.

Therefore, the increase in the price of hydrocarbon products to consumers from the increased cost to drill and operate on the Outer Continental Shelf is expected to be minimal.

That is the administration's solution. They do not expect anything to happen. They are not worried about it. And if there is a problem, just buy more oil from OPEC, send more American dollars overseas. That is the administration's position? And what about the impact on our economy?

We do have a Secretary of Energy. One would think he would be concerned about the cost of energy and the impact on American families. Not so when we look at some of the statements he has made. In the past, he said:

Somehow we have to figure out how to boost the price of gasoline to the levels of Europe.

That is the proposal of the Secretary of Energy—figure out how to boost the price of gasoline to the levels in Europe. How much does gasoline cost in Europe? Almost \$8 a gallon.

The President, when he was a Senator and running for President, did not

seem to think high energy prices were a problem. He just wanted the price to go up gradually. He said the problem is when things go up too quickly.

The American people who try to put bread on the table for their kids, clothing on their backs, get them off to school, and then go to work themselves, notice this. They know every time the cost of a gallon of gasoline goes up by a penny or a nickel or 38 cents, as it has most recently, the economy will suffer as a result. It is specifically a result of the policies of this administration, the policies that ignore the need for American energy.

At a time when we need to be focused on jobs, that we need to realize the amount of uncertainty in the Middle East, there is now sticker shock at the pumps, and it is the policies of this administration that are keeping us from developing the energy security we need.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Nebraska.

#### FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Mr. JOHANNES. Mr. President, I rise today to speak for a few minutes about our current fiscal situation.

Over the next few weeks, we are undoubtedly going to have a very robust debate on our country's future and the tremendous issues we face. We are going to have a debate about the need for fiscal responsibility. One thing all of my colleagues should be able to agree on is that our current level of spending and borrowing and debt is just simply not sustainable. When you are bringing in \$2.2 trillion but you are spending \$3.8 trillion annually, something is seriously wrong. Adding \$1.65 trillion to the national debt each and every year is not the answer. We simply cannot afford to continue in this direction.

For too long, the answer of Washington was: We will be all things to all people—promising everything with really no plan to pay for it. The result now is that we face a financial crisis unlike anything our Nation has ever seen. While Americans are making very tough, painful decisions in their daily lives, their government still refuses to make the same difficult choices.

I come from a State where its citizens really do believe that less government is better government. But even if my colleagues disagree that less government is better, we would be hard-pressed to find anyone who can argue with the numbers. Numbers do not lie, and they cannot be spun.

Let's take a look at the numbers, grim by any economist's viewpoint. We are currently borrowing 42 cents on every dollar. For every dollar spent today, every dollar spent this year by the Federal Government, 42 cents is borrowed. Can you imagine an average family charging nearly half of all of their spending to a credit card? It